19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1918) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

534 Concerning their origin much that is legendary has been written. In the *Karen Thesaurus* we are told in substance that these
538 drums ("klo oh tra oh") are very expensive and are owned in
[182] Lower Burma by a few very wealthy persons, who make offerings
435 of food and liquor to them annually, fearing an early death if they fail to do this. The drums are said by some to have been brought from the "K' wa" country and by others from the "Swa" tribe.[2] Those who went to buy these objects paid according to the number of frogs on them, the price of one with two frogs being twenty rupees. The buyer put down the price and took away the drum, after which the owner came and got his money. If the buyer did not leave the money, he risked losing his way and being overtaken and eaten by the owner. The drums are used in making a noise like that of a gong.[3]

534 Dr. Francis Mason, writing at Toungoo in 1868, speaks of these drums under the name of "kyee-zees," and is better informed
435 than the writer in the *Thesaurus* in saying that they are ob-
● 556 tained from the Shan. He also states that the Karen distinguish ten different kinds of drums according to sound and have a different name for each kind. Dr. Mason tells us that the best-sounding drums are worth a thousand rupees apiece, while the poorest bring only one hundred each. Dr. Mason continues: "The possession of Kyee-zees is what constitutes a rich Karen. No one is considered rich without one, whatever may be his other possessions. Everyone who has money endeavors to turn it into Kyee-zees, and a village that has many of them is the envy of the other villages and it is often the cause of wars to obtain possession of them." [4]

534 Some of the Karens have told me that in the beginning these
[173] drums were obtained from the "Yu" people, who seem to have been the Jung or Yung who occupied Yunnan in ancient times.[5] Indeed, various indications point to the probability that the drums existed or were in use in Yunnan when the ancestors of the Karen passed through there from their home in western China into Burma,

[538 [2] The Swa are mentioned in some of the old Karen tales and appear to have been wild
648] cannibals, of whom but little was known. Their location seems uncertain. Some of the tales place them beyond the great waters, while others suggest that they live to the north. Probably the references are to the Waer, who are one of the head-hunting tribes still living in the northern Shan States, on the Chinese frontier.

[3] *The Karen Thesaurus*, 1847, Vol. I, pp. 227, ff.

[4] *Journal, Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1868, Vol. XXXVII, Pt. II, pp. 128, ff.

[5] Mr. Taw Sein Ko, in *Annual Archæological Report, Burma*, 1917, pp. 22, 23. Mr. Po Lin Te writes in the *Rangoon Gazette*, Sept. 27, 1919, that the Yu were the eldest of five families who emigrated from the Sandy River and were, therefore, entitled to use the drums.

usually heriditary, but he might have no son or nephew to succeed him. In that case the elders chose one of their own number as his successor. In so far as the villagers obeyed any authority at all, they obeyed him.[1] They generally observed his commands, although he possessed no well-defined jurisdiction. Ordinary quarrels, disputes relating to land, questions concerning the ownership of animals, etc., were referred to him for settlement. In most instances his court was a free and informal meeting of villagers and elders; and his decision, incorporating the opinion of the latter, would have the sanction of the group and be accepted by the parties concerned. He was the patriarch of the village, and often its high priest as well. A foray would not be undertaken without his consent. He was accorded the place of honor in the family living-room, which was usually the mat on the side facing eastward. If his rule became extremely displeasing to the villagers, they quietly went to a different site from that chosen by him at the time of the annual migration of the village. Thus, he would be left with only those who remained loyal to him, usually his relatives. The other families were now free to select a new chief or headman.

The chief levied no taxes. He tilled his field like his fellow villagers. He often received gifts of choice game, fruit, or grain; but these were largely a tribute to his personal popularity. If the village was about to engage in a raid, he might assess the people for the purpose of fitting out the expedition; but this would bring him no direct personal benefit, unless he was the organizer of it himself. The Karen had no caste of chiefs, no royal family, or even a privileged social class. Every member of the community shared alike in the ordinary tasks and the privations or prosperity of the seasons.

COMMUNITY LIFE

Wealth formed the only basis of social distinctions in the village life. But this made little difference in outward conditions. The land was free and belonged to the community. Every man was at liberty to take for his own use as many acres of hillside as he could fell. On this score there was little chance for inequality. However, the accumulation of money, which in the early days was represented by silver ingots, later by rupees, enabled one to purchase buffaloes or cattle or even an elephant, although the last was more often caught than bought. The ownership of a bronze drum brought more distinction to a family than that of seven elephants.

[1] [i.e. the chief -- analyst.]

25; Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Karen AP7

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341. KAREN LIQUOR-STILL.

miniature bamboo hut is made (*tâ-lhâ*, No. 337), and furnished with utensils or symbols of such. The joints of bamboo piled against the horizontal bar represent vessels for the blood of the offering; the whole offering is really appropriated by the votaries. The *yahán* have persuaded the Karéns under their influence to discontinue keeping animals, so as to be out of temptation to sacrifice to *nats*. The Karén idea of *nat* is exclusively an evil spirit, whereas the Burmans have the conception of *thadyâ* and *byammâ*, beings of a transfigured human nature; by them *nat* is chiefly used in this sense (p. 186). The Karéns also offer to the *nats* the liquor they brew (*kaung*), which is distilled from a wort made by setting boiled rice to ferment. The drinking of this offering at the shrine is accompanied by saltatory movements. What the Karéns can save, they invest in purchase of elephants (No. 333). Owing to the transient nature of the hill-settlements, the paths do not get well enough worn for pack-oxen. The elephant is the only beast of burden available to them; an elephant can carry five to ten hundredweight in the hills (No. 314). A small village clubs together to buy an elephant to carry in the corn and take the secondary crops to market; well-to-do villages own several elephants. Individuals who own a couple are accounted wealthy, but some own as many as twenty. They hire the animals out for carrying produce or for timber-work, or engage in this business on their own account. Their spare cash the Karéns bury in the earth or hide in growing bamboos. The point of the *dâ* is struck into a green culm so as to open a slit. The rupees are dropped in, the *dâ* pulled out, and not a trace remains. Karéns are good workers in bamboo and cane, and are excellent woodmen. They are expert in

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342. KAREN HIDING COIN IN A GROWING BAMBOO.